

# MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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**Note:** This annual report for calendar year 2021 covers information and data from Program Year (PY) 2020 (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021).



Photo of Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park provided by Alex Nagy.

# MISSION STATEMENT

## MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

### OUR VISION

The Missouri State Rehabilitation Council envisions a society that values all of its members equally and provides opportunities so that all people are able to meet their needs, fulfill their dreams, and participate in society.

### OUR MISSION

To ensure that persons with disabilities have opportunities to be as productive as possible by advising Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation that services provided to persons with disabilities are:

- of the highest quality.
- consumer directed.
- responsive to consumer choice.
- effective.
- individualized.
- culturally specific and relevant to labor market trends.

### OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

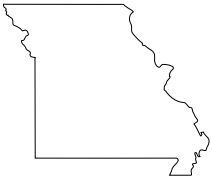
To work in partnership with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation to achieve positive outcomes for persons with disabilities by:

- providing input on the state plan, policies, and practices affecting services to persons with disabilities.
- obtaining and interpreting consumer input.
- identifying corrective action consistent with that input.
- advocating for adequate resources to ensure that the rehabilitation needs of all Missourians are met.
- identifying strategies to address the needs of people who are not being served or who are being underserved.
- supporting VR in complying with laws applicable to persons with disabilities.

*(Adopted Nov. 4, 1999)*



# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



## MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

3024 Dupont Circle ■ Jefferson City, Missouri 65109  
Phone: 573-751-3251 ■ Fax: 573-751-1441

**Lori Pace**, Rogersville  
Chairperson

**Earl Brown**, Salem  
Vice Chairperson

**Daniel Cayou**, Jefferson City

**Diana Eakright**, Independence

**Karen Gridley**, Kansas City

**Judy Heard**, Kansas City

**Bob Hosutt**, Nixa

**Debby Loveall-Stewart**, Joplin

**Lydia Mitchell**, Florissant

**Gary Otten**, St. Louis

**Sarah Prechtel**, St. Louis

**Patricia Runge**, Tuscumbia

**Jennifer Stanfield**, St. Louis

**Tim Tadlock**, Gallatin

**Cathee Wolford**, Jefferson City

**Yvonne Wright**, New Bloomfield

**Timothy E. Gaines**, Jefferson City  
Ex Officio Member  
VR Assistant Commissioner

December 30, 2021

The Honorable Michael L. Parson  
Governor of Missouri  
State Capitol  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

On behalf of the members of the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council, it is my honor to present the Council's annual report for 2021. In these pages, you will find the progress made by Missouri citizens who were served by vocational rehabilitation programs.

Each Council member has unique experiences in advocating for the rights of our fellow Missourians whose physical or mental disabilities may pose barriers to productive employment. Through our quarterly meetings and committee deliberations, we have given our support to Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation to empower individuals with disabilities and to encourage decisions that lead to greater self-sufficiency.

We have advised Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation on innovative programming to reach the underserved populations in the state and on exploring additional methods of obtaining consumer satisfaction feedback.

It has been my great privilege to work with members of the Council as well as with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation staff, all of whom are dedicated to providing our citizens with the opportunity to make choices in obtaining meaningful employment. Employment is a vital key to independence and equality.

Respectfully,

Lori Pace  
Chairperson

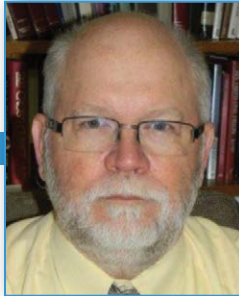
# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

## CHAIRPERSON



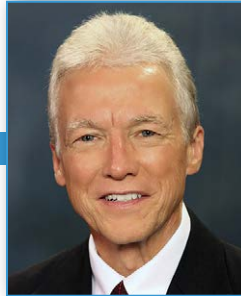
**LORI PACE**  
Rogersville

## VICE CHAIRPERSON



**EARL BROWN**  
Salem

## EX OFFICIO MEMBER



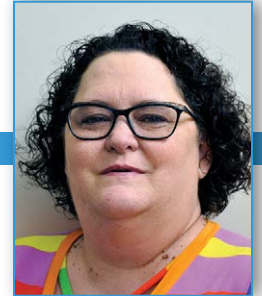
**TIMOTHY E. GAINES**  
Jefferson City



**DANIEL CAYOU**  
Jefferson City



**DIANA EAKRIGHT**  
Independence



**KAREN GRIDLEY**  
Kansas City



**JUDY HEARD**  
Kansas City



**BOB HOSUTT**  
Nixa



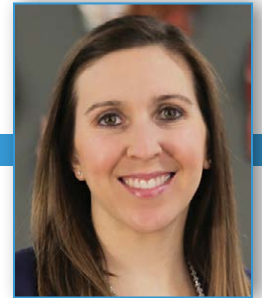
**DEBBY LOVEALL-STEWART**  
Joplin



**LYDIA MITCHELL**  
Florissant



**GARY OTTEN**  
St. Louis



**SARAH PRECHTEL**  
St. Louis



**PATRICIA RUNGE**  
Tuscumbia



**JENNIFER STANFIELD**  
St. Louis



**TIM TADLOCK**  
Gallatin



**CATHEE WOLFORD**  
Jefferson City



**YVONNE WRIGHT**  
New Bloomfield

# COUNCIL'S PURPOSE

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was first authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1998 (referred to hereafter as the Act). Section 105 of the Act requires the state vocational rehabilitation agency to establish a council.

The SRC was initially formed on June 1, 1993. Members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms. As required by the Act, SRC members represent the Statewide Independent Living Council; the Parent Training and Information Center; the Client Assistance Program; the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program; the Office of Special Education, which is the state agency responsible for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; the Missouri Workforce Development Board; community rehabilitation program service providers; disability advocacy groups; current or former applicants/recipients of vocational rehabilitation services; and business, industry, and labor.

The SRC is responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and advising VR regarding its performance on such issues as eligibility; the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services; and any other functions affecting people with disabilities. Full SRC meetings are held quarterly on the first Thursday of February, May, August, and November. Subcommittees meet as needed throughout the year.

During 2021, the SRC was actively involved with VR in the activities below:

Reviewed and provided recommendations to VR regarding the combined state plan's comprehensive statewide needs assessment, goals, priorities, performance accountability measures, and comprehensive system of personnel development

Provided recommendations to VR on policy revisions and rule changes

Participated in and reviewed feedback from VR public hearings to provide input on the combined state plan

Evaluated and provided recommendations on the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and satisfaction with those services

Reviewed hearing decisions and mediation outcomes

Assisted VR staff in preparing the SRC's annual report for the governor and the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of vocational rehabilitation services in Missouri

Provided comments to VR regarding issues pertaining to waiting lists (Order of Selection)

Coordinated and participated in presentations and activities with other councils and agencies including the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Client Assistance Program, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Department of Mental Health, the Parent Training and Information Center, Missouri Assistive Technology, the Hearing Loss Association, the Governor's Council on Disability, the Office of Workforce Development, and the Office of Special Education

# — VISION, MISSION, AND PRINCIPLES —

## MISSOURI VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

### VISION

Transforming lives through a great VR experience for everyone

### MISSION

Empowering people with disabilities through employment

### OPERATING PRINCIPLES

We will:

- Act with a sense of urgency.
- Provide quality customer service.
- Maximize our resources.
- Do the right thing.
- Put people first.
- Continuously evaluate our practices/processes.



# LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR



Office of Adult Learning and  
Rehabilitation Services

Timothy E. Gaines  
Assistant Commissioner

3024 Dupont Circle • Jefferson City, MO 65109 • [dese.mo.gov](http://dese.mo.gov)

December 30, 2021

The Honorable Michael L. Parson  
Governor of Missouri  
State Capitol  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

The annual report presented to you from the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for 2021 provides information on the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation employment program for individuals with disabilities.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation has operated under an Order of Selection since October 2003 due to the number of applicants requesting services, rising service costs, and limited federal funding. The Rehabilitation Act requires eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities to receive services first. All other eligible individuals receive services as funds become available.

During Program Year 2020, Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation helped 3,521 individuals reach successful employment outcomes with a success rate of 50.9 percent for individuals who received services and exited the program.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation works closely with school districts across the state. The program annually provides transition services, including pre-employment transition services, to approximately 7,600 high school students and youths with disabilities.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation grant dollars expended for purchased client services from community vendors are effective and help local economies. In addition, the total annual increase in earnings for individuals with successful outcomes was over \$57 million. The program's customer satisfaction survey results are consistently among the top in the nation.

In closing, the Council and I offer our sincere appreciation for your personal interest and support in serving people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy E. Gaines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy E. Gaines  
Assistant Commissioner, Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services



# HIGHLIGHTS



**21,228**  
individuals worked  
with VR counselors.



**1,105**  
successfully employed  
individuals received supported  
employment services.



**3,521**  
individuals achieved successful  
employment outcomes.



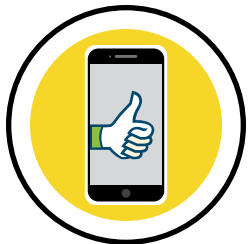
**460**  
successfully employed individuals  
received Individual Placement  
and Support services.



**50.9%**  
of individuals who received services  
were successfully employed.



**98%**  
of successfully employed individuals  
had significant disabilities.



**1,449**  
youths reached successful  
employment outcomes.



**\$57,307,796**  
was the total annual increase  
in earnings for individuals  
with successful outcomes.

# AGENCY OVERVIEW

Prepared on behalf of the SRC, this annual report highlights various programs and services of VR during Program Year (PY) 2020 from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021. With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, VR services will now be reported on a federal program year rather than a federal fiscal year.

This past year has been both challenging and enlightening as the coronavirus pandemic changed the way individuals interact and the way services are provided. VR has met challenges that the coronavirus created by developing new ways to serve individuals with disabilities. All VR offices are open for in-person services and offer virtual options when necessary. During these unprecedented times, VR continues to carry out its mission of empowering people with disabilities through employment.

On Oct. 1, 2003, due to insufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals, VR began operating under an Order of Selection with three priority categories. Eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are required by law to receive services first (Category 1). Eligible individuals who have less significant disabilities are required to be placed on a waiting list for services (Categories 2 and 3).

During PY 2020, VR counselors worked with more than 21,000 individuals in various categories and helped 3,521 individuals reach a successful employment outcome. On an average daily basis, VR served more than 12,000 individuals.

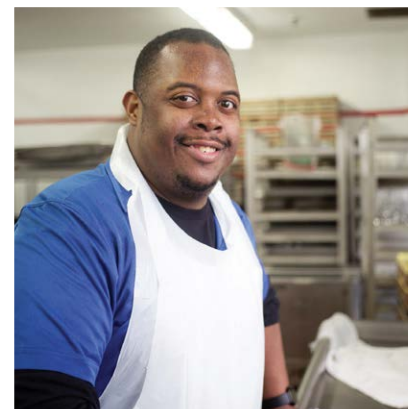
## STATE FUNDING AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

VR receives state funding from the general revenue fund, the Missouri Lottery, and the Department of Mental Health. The match requirement is 21.3 percent state funding and 78.7 percent federal funding.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) reimburses state vocational rehabilitation agencies for the costs of providing services to assist SSA disability recipients in becoming gainfully employed. Ticket Tracker software is used to interface with VR's case-management system. The software matches and identifies individuals receiving SSA disability benefits whom VR helped in reaching their employment goals. Ticket Tracker has streamlined the consumer identification and reimbursement submission process, enabling VR to receive SSA reimbursements in a more timely and efficient manner. In PY 2020, VR received \$2,644,848 in reimbursement claims. A portion of this funding helps support the Centers for Independent Living in Missouri.



**Nick Beatty** participated in a middle skills work-based learning pilot through a collaboration among VR, MERS Goodwill and the Lewis and Clark Career Center (both of St. Charles), and the Missouri Job Center of St. Charles County.



**Keith Washington** works in the kitchen at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch.



## WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) strengthens the workforce development system by aligning and improving employment, training, and education programs. Areas in which WIOA affects the VR program include employment for individuals with disabilities, employer relationships, services for youths and students with disabilities, and collaboration with other federal and state agencies and partners.

With regard to VR, WIOA focuses on providing services to individuals with disabilities, including youths and students with disabilities, to assist them in achieving competitive, integrated employment. VR continues to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment. VR is committed to developing new relationships with employers and providing flexible strategies like on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships, and customized employment. VR has worked with other agencies to create a combined state plan that describes how VR and its partners will collaboratively deliver integrated services to Missouri's job seekers, workers, and employers under WIOA.

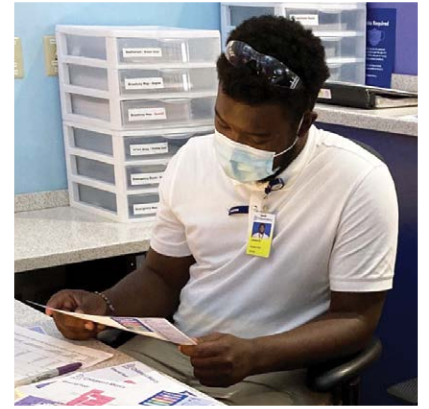
## COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

VR and the SRC jointly conduct an annual comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of Missourians. The conclusions and recommendations of the assessment are incorporated into VR's goals and priorities for the purpose of improving services.

VR uses many methods to collect information for the assessment including customer satisfaction surveys, public hearings, VR strategic teams, SRC input, VR case data, and national census statistics.

Two areas that the assessment specifically focuses on are the needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals from populations that have been traditionally unserved or underserved by vocational rehabilitation programs. The PY 2020 needs assessment identified the minority populations of Hispanics and African-Americans, along with individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI), and justice and foster care involved students with disabilities, as underserved. Figure 1 (page 12) reflects the closure percentages by ethnicity for PY 2020.

VR remains committed to improving services for underserved populations, increasing their employment outcomes, and reducing the number of individuals from these populations who drop out prior to receiving services.



**Jomarea Mills**, a student at Central High School in Kansas City, participated in a summer work experience program at Children's Mercy Hospital. VR worked with the high school, the hospital, and Ability KC to provide the work experience.



**Sarah Geer** works at a local eatery in the St. Louis metro area where she ensures that customers have a wonderful experience.



**Quinton Carroll-White** works at a sandwich shop in Clayton where he holds many responsibilities. A talented artist, he also won the 2021 Disability Employment Awareness Month Poster Contest (pictured below) sponsored by the Governor's Council on Disability.



VR utilizes the following strategies to address these areas of need:

- A diversity consultant is employed to assist with improving services to underserved areas, developing training programs, and establishing outreach strategies for individuals from diverse cultures.
- The Cultural Diversity Team (composed of the diversity consultant, VR management, and district office staff) meets throughout the year to develop strategies for serving individuals from diverse cultures. A subcommittee focuses on the recruitment of a diverse and inclusive workforce.
- Multiple pilot projects have been developed to provide peer mentoring to students with disabilities involved in the justice and foster care systems along with homeless and housing-insecure youths.
- Employees are provided with training opportunities on cultural competency that cover aspects of diversity.
- An autism services liaison has been appointed to serve as a resource for staff throughout the state. This liaison works with providers on strategies for better serving individuals with ASD.
- Employment Services Plus has been developed. This program is designed to assist individuals with ASD, TBI, or deafness/hearing loss who require additional supports to reach successful employment outcomes.

The assessment also addresses the necessities of youths and students with disabilities including their need for pre-employment or other transition services. Another of VR's goals is to increase the number of employment outcomes for youths with disabilities. For strategy information on this area of need, see page 15.

## CLOSURE PERCENTAGES BY ETHNICITY: PY 2020

STATUS	WHITE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	OTHER
3,521 successful employment outcomes	75%	20%	5%
3,392 closed unsuccessfully after services	71%	23%	6%
2,413 closed after eligibility before services	72%	21%	7%

Figure 1



# PARTNERING

## WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT PARTNERS

WIOA requires the alignment of core programs in order to provide coordinated and streamlined services. These core programs are VR; Rehabilitation Services for the Blind; Adult Education and Literacy; Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth; and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a combined partner.) Teams composed of representatives from WIOA core partner programs, as well as other partner organizations, have been formed to develop strategies for serving mutual clients. These teams have identified focus areas, such as best practices and agency cross-trainings, that can be shared statewide and at the local level. All program partners strive to improve the workforce system and services to job seekers, employees, and employers.

VR collaborates, coordinates, and cooperates with partner programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities benefit from seamless access to career services, education, and training. VR also participates in business services teams within the workforce system to better serve employers' needs. VR offers a dual-customer approach by supporting its job candidates and businesses in order to achieve successful outcomes for both.

## CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are community-based nonresidential programs designed to promote independent living for people with disabilities. In Missouri, there are 22 CILs that offer independent living services. The CILs are funded through federal and state independent living grants and are managed by local boards composed of individuals with disabilities who have been successful in establishing their own independent lifestyles. VR and the CILs work together on a regular basis to share referrals and provide services to mutual clientele. A number of CILs have VR district office staff as active board members. VR and the CILs have developed a summer work experience program to provide pre-employment transition services. The CILs offer students who are potentially eligible for VR services access to job exploration activities, workplace-readiness training, social support, and instruction on self-advocacy (including peer mentoring). Last summer, nine CILs were involved in the program and worked with 58 students.

## MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS

VR participates in the Missouri Reentry Process, which encourages collaboration among government and local agencies to improve the transition of offenders leaving prison and returning to local communities and work. State government agencies are the Departments of Corrections, Economic Development, Elementary and Secondary Education, Health and Senior Services, Mental Health, Public Safety, Revenue, Social Services, Transportation, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator. Other partnering agencies include the federal probation system along with local law enforcement, faith-based organizations, service providers, and treatment programs.



**Neil Balani** works as a sales advisor for an office supply company in St. Louis where he provides customer service.

VR also is participating in a pilot program with the Departments of Corrections, Social Services, and Higher Education and Workforce Development. VR provides career counseling and coordinating services with other agencies for pre-release offenders with disabilities in order to assist them in finding employment and returning to their communities.

### DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Divisions of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Developmental Disabilities (DD) have been longstanding partners with VR in assisting eligible individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation services in order to gain employment. Partnership activities include the funding of DB101, a customized Missouri benefits-planning website. Cross-system collaboration remains ongoing through system change initiatives, grant and technical support opportunities, and local/regional trainings. VR has appointed a DMH liaison, and DMH has representation on WIOA teams consisting of combined partner programs and other partner agencies.

In partnership with DBH, Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based supported employment service for adults with mental illness, has been a focus. IPS requires close program and clinical relationships between local mental health and vocational rehabilitation staff to ensure success.

VR also is partnering with DD and other agencies to provide a customized employment program that promotes the specific abilities of individuals with disabilities in order to meet employers' needs.

### COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

VR and community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) collaboratively work with an outcome-based service model that emphasizes quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. CRPs are nonprofit organizations accredited by recognized professional associations that have developed commonly accepted processes for evaluating employment-related services. All independently owned and operated, CRPs provide services that may include vocational planning, job development and placement services, skills training, specialized employment services, supported employment, and transition services.

Multiple ad hoc teams composed of VR and CRP staff have worked together to develop and design new processes. VR and its CRP partners have implemented several projects to improve services. During summer 2021, a six-week work experience program for students with disabilities was held. Thirty-four CRPs, 891 VR-eligible students and 209 schools participated at more than 200 employment sites. Collaboration and partnership are cornerstones of the relationship between VR and CRPs and have fostered an environment of creativity and innovation. The VR-CRP steering committee meets regularly to review progress on their organizations' joint projects and on service delivery.





**Mackenzie Clayton**, a student at Park Hill South High School, worked for Petco in Kansas City as part of a summer work experience program. To offer the work experience, VR partnered with Park Hill South, Petco, and Easterseals Midwest.

## TRANSITION SERVICES

WIOA places a significant emphasis on services to youths and students. The law's intent is to ensure that young individuals with disabilities are better prepared and have more opportunities for competitive, integrated employment. WIOA requires that VR (in collaboration with local education agencies) provide pre-employment transition services to eligible or potentially eligible students ages 16 to 21. These services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, workplace-readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy (including peer mentoring).

VR has helped to develop and implement innovative programs to provide pre-employment transition services. VR also has established partnerships with the University of Missouri's College of Education, CILs, CRPs, businesses, and local school districts. With its partners, VR is expanding pre-employment transition services to all parts of the state. During PY 2020, over 7,200 potentially eligible students received at least one pre-employment transition service.

VR provides youths with disabilities ages 14 to 24 a variety of other transition services such as job placement, supported employment, training, and rehabilitation technology. A team of professionals from VR, local school districts, and other agencies has been assembled to offer support and technical assistance on these services.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Disability Categories of Those Served: PY 2020

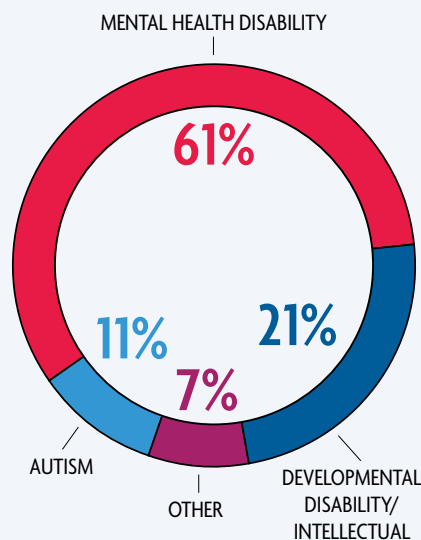


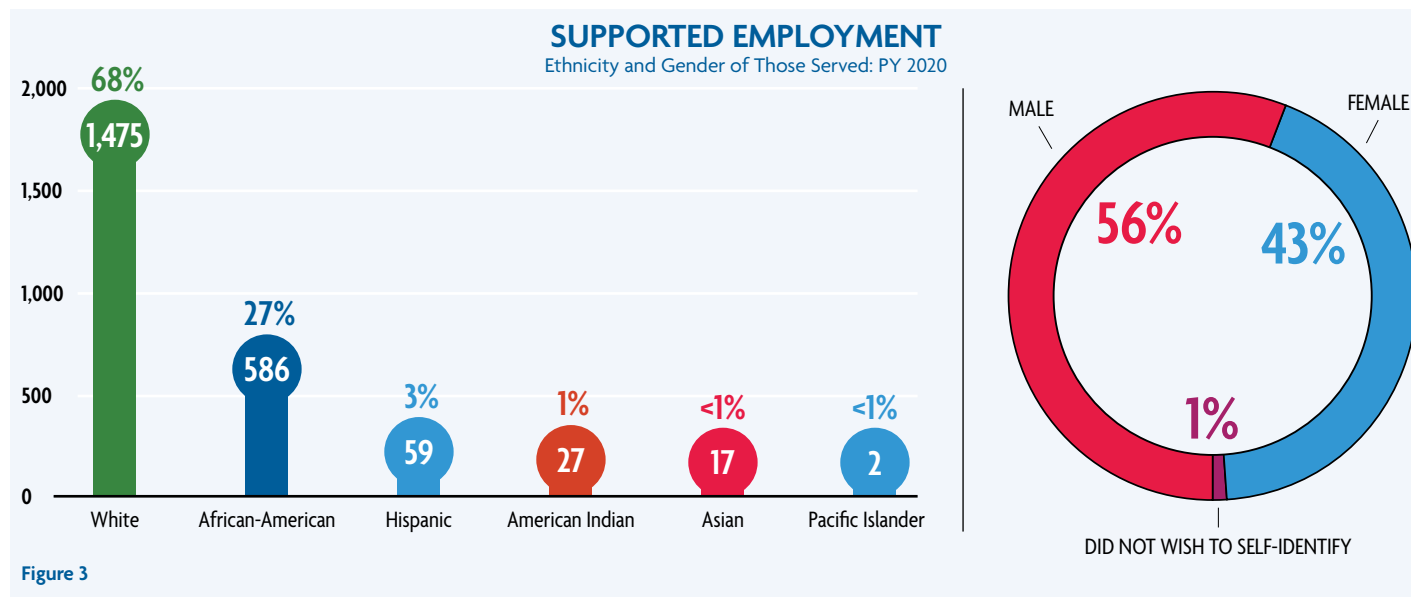
Figure 2

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

VR provides supported employment (SE) services to a diverse population as indicated by Figures 2-5 (pages 15-16). Some of these services are jointly provided by DMH DBH-DD. SE is defined as competitive work in an integrated work setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. During PY 2020, 51 percent of individuals who received SE services and exited the program were successfully employed.

In PY 2020, VR worked with 122 CRP locations that provide SE services and cover all counties in Missouri. An outcome-based model of SE services is used that features a period of discovery and exploration with the individual to develop vocational direction and community-based job exploration. Outcomes include job placement, 30 days of independent employment, and 90 days of employment. In addition to these milestones, on-the-job and off-site supports may also be authorized.

VR places an emphasis on the development of natural support systems to help individuals participating in supported employment successfully remain in the workforce. These natural supports help to reduce the cost of providing SE services. Figure 5 (page 16) shows the average cost of services, hourly wages, and other statistics for supported employment.



**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**  
Age of Those Served: PY 2020

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 25	654	30%
25-34	541	25%
35-44	403	19%
45-54	324	15%
55-64	219	10%
65 and over	25	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,166</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 4**

## OTHER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS: PY 2020

Average cost of supported employment services per person .....	<b>\$1,377</b>
Average hourly wage per person .....	<b>\$10.91</b>
Average hours per week worked per person .....	<b>25</b>
Success rate .....	<b>51%</b>
Successful outcomes .....	<b>1,105</b>
Total participants .....	<b>2,166</b>

**Figure 5**

**Note:** All information in figures 2-5 applies to SE services only.

## REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY

In PY 2020, VR provided a variety of rehabilitation technology services, assistive devices, and equipment to 635 individuals who received services and exited the program for a total cost of \$4,935,457. VR purchases assistive devices to help with increasing, maintaining, or improving functional capabilities. Devices could include hearing aids and other personal listening and communication devices, vehicle and home modifications, wheelchairs, and other powered mobility equipment. Rehabilitation technology services include consultation, evaluation, design, customization, adaptation, maintenance, repair, therapy, and technical training.

VR and Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) have collaborated to develop a cooperative agreement to ensure the maximum statewide utilization of services. The agreement provides a plan for service coordination; for using resources to the best advantage; for information sharing, technical support, and training; to facilitate the referral of potentially eligible individuals between agencies; and to help eligible people obtain rehabilitation technology services. A VR staff member is a representative on the MoAT Advisory Council.

Several VR counselors have specialized caseloads in the area of rehabilitation technology. Located throughout Missouri are six VR counselors and one assistant director who are skilled in manual communication for the deaf and hard of hearing. Also, designated hard of hearing specialists in the Kansas City area are acquiring additional education on hearing aids and rehabilitation technology for individuals with hearing loss.

VR utilizes assistive technology demonstration sites located at CILs across the state for exploring, reviewing, and demonstrating various devices, services, and resources that are available to individuals with alternative communication needs. VR counselors are allowed to borrow rehabilitation technology equipment from MoAT for individuals to test before purchase.



With VR's assistance, **Dylan Hunter** works at a restaurant in Louisiana as part of the kitchen team.



## VINCHELLE HARDISON

*By Suzanna Brown, VR Counselor II*

Vinchelle Hardison has been a Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation client since 2009. Overcoming her disability of impairment (mobility and manipulation), she began her practice as a medical doctor at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, on June 24, 2021.

Early on in her life, Vinchelle was diagnosed with mixed connective tissue disease (MCTD), whose major components are arthritis, scleroderma, and dermatomyositis. The combination of these ailments led to contractures in her joints, tendons, and muscles, most notably in her hands. At a later age, she was diagnosed with lupus, which caused complications that required a kidney transplant.

Vinchelle said that living with MCTD has greatly influenced her life, her desires, and her dreams. Ultimately, it played a major factor in her pursuit of medicine as a career.

Growing up, Vinchelle spent a lot of time in pediatric hospitals. They became a second home to her as, at diagnosis, her disease course was aggressive with a rapid progression. As she grew up, she developed a desire to care for children who suffer from similar ailments. She attributes a lot of her drive and determination to her mother, who raised her with a mindset to keep going and to do whatever it takes. Vinchelle has persevered despite various pitfalls. She has undergone four different surgeries on her hands within the past 10 years, physical and occupational therapy, and a kidney transplant from her mother, all to ensure that her goal of becoming a doctor was still attainable.

Lupus nephritis, a frequent complication for those who have systemic lupus, made it difficult for Vinchelle to cross the finish line. In 2019, she had a serious health setback when her body began rejecting the kidney transplant, and she was unable to continue her medical training for several months. She resumed her studies in 2020 and graduated in May 2021. There were times she thought about giving up, but she continued to persevere no matter the obstacle. She endured so much to get to where she is today.

In order to support Vinchelle in reaching her goal, VR has helped fund her schooling, educational supplies, living expenses, and required certification testing, along with providing guidance and counseling throughout the last 12 years. VR assisted Vinchelle through her University of Missouri graduation in 2013, after which she applied to schools both in Missouri and out of state. She was accepted into Northeast Ohio Medical University in 2016, where she stayed until the completion of her medical training. Her VR counselor, Suzanna Brown, described Vinchelle as a “rock star” who has “refused to give up against staggering odds.” Vinchelle said that without the services provided by VR, making her dreams come true would not have been possible. ■



# SUCCESS STORIES

## ADAM RICE

If offered the opportunity, how many of us would choose to give a 13-minute presentation all about the failures in our lives? For Adam Rice, recovering from the challenges he's faced in his own life has provided him with the courage to be honest about his personal journey and the ability to help those who might be struggling with similar circumstances.

"I think vulnerability is a powerful tool," he said. "When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, it allows others to do the same."

In 2021, Adam gave a TEDx talk titled **"Addicted to Failure"** at the Missouri University of Science and Technology, where he graduated from in December with a degree in petroleum engineering. In his speech, he shared the lessons he learned while reinventing his life after years spent struggling with drug addiction.

"If you do any kind of a 12-step program, the last step is essentially giving back," he said. "Usually that's giving back to the next unfortunate addict, but I apply it more to the community as a whole. A big part of it is being open and honest about my story."

While studying for his bachelor's degree at Missouri S&T, Adam also worked on campus as a student success coach, mentoring 10 younger university students, and as a peer wellness educator, helping students who might be facing challenges with addiction similar to what he went through before getting clean.

His VR counselor, Leslie Stanley, said Adam has always been appreciative of the help he has received and "is absolutely paying it forward" with the positive direction his life has taken.

"His legacy is really going to be to help others," she said.

Adam qualified for VR services after suffering a severe automobile accident on Highway 63 in mid-Missouri, which left him using a wheelchair for months. Leslie and Adam identified petroleum engineering early in the career-planning process based on his previous work experience for MFA Oil. VR provided financial assistance to help with housing, tuition and fees, and transportation costs for the community college Adam started at and also after he moved on to Missouri S&T. Before he graduated in December, Adam had already lined up a job starting in January 2022 with BP working for the company's Castrol brand.

Leslie described Adam as "humble and thankful" and the type of person who truly values the educational opportunities that VR helped provide.

"I just could not be more proud of him," she said. "It's fun to be just a tiny little part of his story." ■



Photo of **Adam Rice** provided by the Missouri University of Science and Technology.



# SUCCESS STORIES

## DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT

The mission of Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation is “Empowering people with disabilities through employment.” While the focus typically is on the success of individuals who better their lives through work, that success also can translate into a win-win scenario for the businesses that employ them.

Distribution Management, a shipping and fulfillment center located in St. Peters, hosted a VR-sponsored summer work experience in 2021. Almost 900 students with disabilities participated in work experiences at 200 employment sites statewide in 2021.

What made the Distribution Management site notable was how well the students matched the needs of the business. Matt Malone, shipping manager for Distribution Management, said the students were committed both to the tasks they were assigned and to helping the company achieve its goals.

“As a group, we were extremely excited with how this outcome has come about,” he said.

Of the seven students who participated in the summer work experience at Distribution Management, two stayed on with the company as permanent employees. Malone said these students initiated remaining with the company all on their own, and that an added benefit to Distribution Management was a reduction in the costs typically associated with new employees.

“Those costs that we usually have were very minimal,” he said.

VR partners with various CRPs to provide on-site supports for the summer work experiences. Darcell Fleeman, an instructor with BCI Skills Center, helped to make the Distribution Management site as successful as it was. She already has a commitment from the company to participate again in 2022.

Fleeman said the supports her organization provides to its clients are always tailored to the individual. Every person she works with has different needs; but she added that as a group, they all are looking for ways to become contributing members of society and “unfortunately, too many times they’re pushed aside.”

“Our clients show up and go to their jobs, and 95 percent of the time they’re drama-free,” she said.

“I think companies should be (more) open to using team members such as these,” Malone said. “They’re a great option for our workforce. They can contribute needs to companies that I don’t think the bottom dollar reflects. The relationships you make with the people you meet — those are invaluable.” ■



**Robert Johnson** (left) is pictured with **Christie Viehmann** (right), VR counselor IV, at Distribution Management in St. Peters during the 2021 summer work experience.



# SATISFACTION SURVEY

Satisfaction with staff and services is a VR priority, and the SRC's Program Evaluation Committee continues to work with VR on reviewing and analyzing feedback from individuals who receive VR services. This feedback is shared with management, supervisors, and counselors and is used as a tool to improve services, evaluate staff performance, and determine training needs.

During PY 2020, survey letters and postage-paid envelopes were mailed to a random sample of 9,773 individuals at various stages in the rehabilitation process (with a response rate of 12 percent). Survey feedback was positive. Results showed that 98 percent of those surveyed felt they were treated with respect, 96 percent felt they knew the purpose of VR, and 95 percent felt that staff was available when needed. The overall results are listed on page 22.

## SURVEY COMMENTS

*"VR has helped me start a positive change in my life that has and will dramatically help me."*

*"They helped me get my dream job."*

*"They helped me discover my own potential. I'm much more confident now."*

*"VR is the reason I was able to get my first job."*

*"Thank you for all of your help! I am so excited to begin this new chapter, and it's all thanks to VR's wonderful services."*

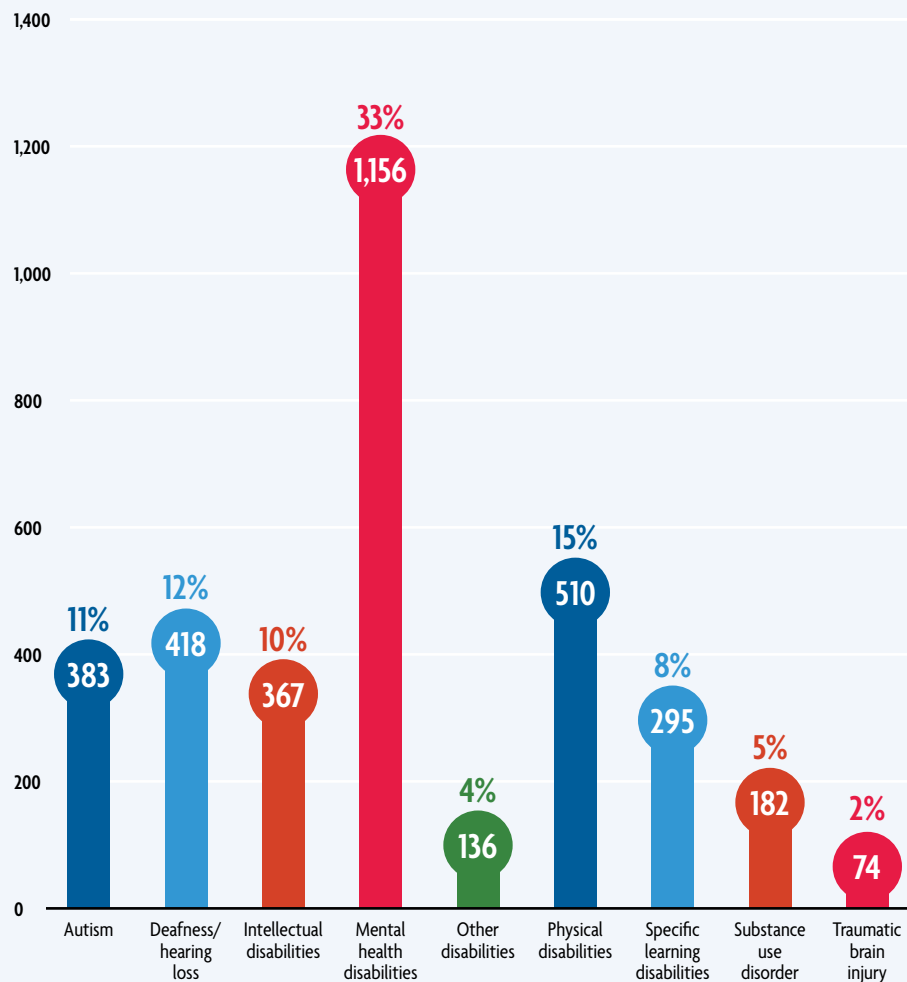
# SATISFACTION SURVEY

SURVEY RESULTS (Specific group responses)	TOTAL RESPONSES RECEIVED	STAFF WAS AVAILABLE		STAFF TREATED ME WITH RESPECT		I KNEW PURPOSE OF VR SERVICES		COUNSELOR HELPED PLAN SERVICES		COUNSELOR EXPLAINED CHOICES	
		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Total responses	1,054	95%	5%	98%	2%	96%	4%	92%	8%	94%	6%
Open cases	470	97%	3%	99%	1%	96%	4%	94%	6%	96%	4%
Successful outcomes	384	96%	4%	99%	1%	96%	4%	95%	5%	96%	4%
Unsuccessful outcomes; closed before services	37	86%	14%	92%	8%	91%	9%	66%	34%	76%	24%
Unsuccessful outcomes; closed after services	163	89%	11%	94%	6%	94%	6%	85%	15%	86%	14%
Supported employment individuals	284	96%	4%	98%	2%	98%	2%	93%	7%	96%	4%
Individuals under 25 at application	357	97%	3%	99%	1%	98%	2%	91%	9%	95%	5%
Individuals with autism	142	96%	4%	98%	2%	99%	1%	97%	3%	99%	1%
Individuals with deafness/hearing loss	119	98%	2%	99%	1%	90%	10%	90%	10%	95%	5%
Individuals with mental health disabilities	308	94%	6%	97%	3%	94%	6%	90%	10%	92%	8%
Individuals with physical disabilities	163	96%	4%	98%	2%	94%	6%	93%	7%	94%	6%
Individuals with traumatic brain injury	29	93%	7%	97%	3%	96%	4%	96%	4%	97%	3%
Individuals with other disabilities	195	97%	3%	99%	1%	93%	7%	93%	7%	96%	4%

# PROGRAM DATA

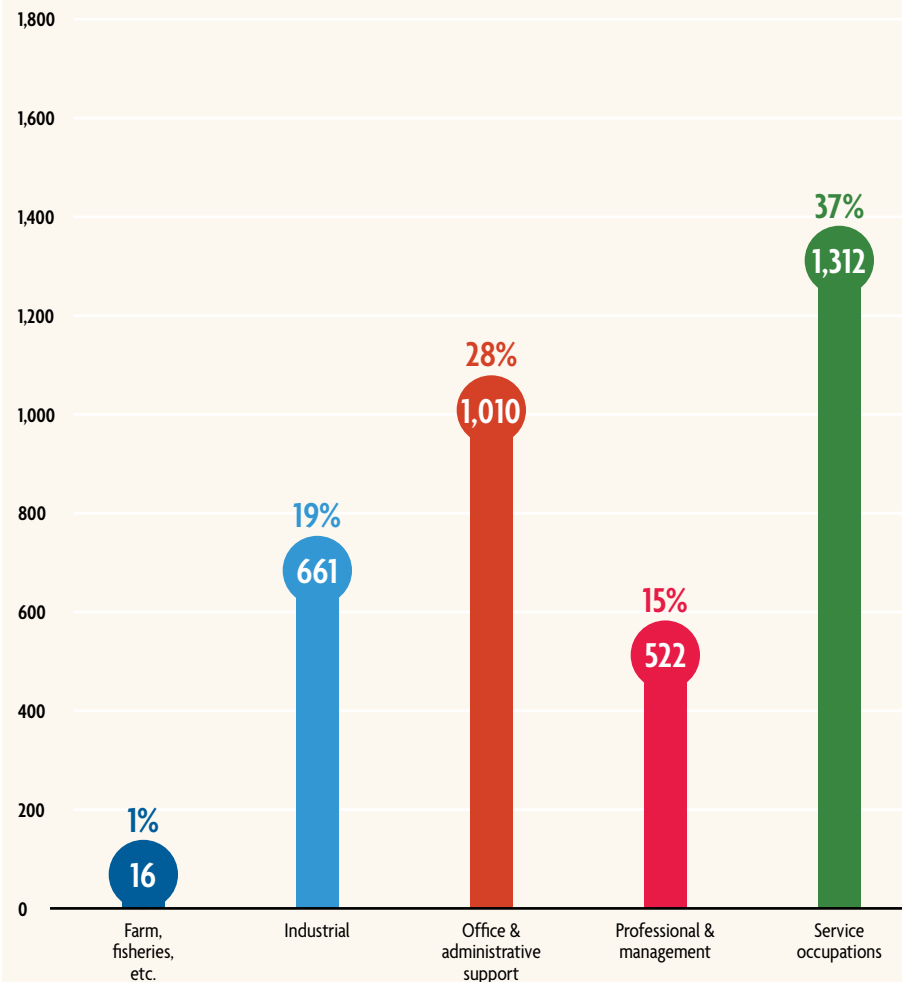
## DISABILITY CATEGORIES

3,521 Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2020



## OCCUPATIONS

3,521 Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2020





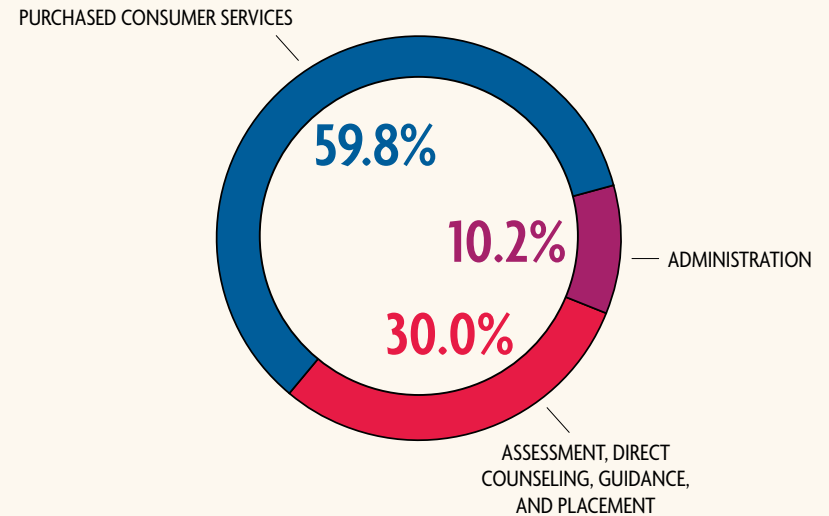
# PROGRAM DATA

## IMPACT OF VR SERVICES: PY 2020



With an increase in average weekly earnings of \$313 for 3,521 individuals with successful outcomes, the total annual increase in income amounted to \$57,307,796.

## EXPENDITURES: PY 2020



## GENDER

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2020

GENDER	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Male	2,026	57%
Female	1,486	42%
Did not wish to self-identify	9	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,521</b>	<b>100%</b>

## ETHNICITY

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2020

ETHNICITY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
White	2,640	75%
African-American	690	20%
Hispanic	115	3%
American Indian	42	1%
Asian	26	<1%
Pacific Islander	8	<1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,521</b>	<b>100%</b>

## AGE

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2020

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 25	1,243	35%
25-34	742	21%
35-44	516	15%
45-54	450	13%
55-64	398	11%
65 and over	172	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,521</b>	<b>100%</b>

# OFFICES

## 1) CAPE GIRARDEAU VR

3102 Blattner Drive, Suite 103  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63703  
Toll-free: 877-702-9883

## 2) CENTRAL OFFICE VR

3024 Dupont Circle  
Jefferson City, MO 65109  
Toll-free: 877-222-8963

## 3) CHILLICOTHE VR

603 W. Mohawk Road  
Chillicothe, MO 64601  
Toll-free: 866-572-4049

## 4) COLUMBIA VR

900 W. Nifong Blvd., Suite 210  
Columbia, MO 65203  
Toll-free: 877-222-8961

## 5) FARMINGTON VR

901 Progress Drive, Suite 100  
Farmington, MO 63640  
Toll-free: 800-640-7110

## 6) HANNIBAL VR

112 Jaycee Drive  
Hannibal, MO 63401  
Toll-free: 877-222-8960

## 7) JEFFERSON CITY VR

1500 Southridge Drive, Suite 200  
Jefferson City, MO 65109  
Toll-free: 866-661-9106

## 8) JOPLIN VR

801 E. 15th St., Suite B  
Joplin, MO 64804  
Toll-free: 877-222-8964

## 9) KANSAS CITY DOWNTOWN VR

615 E. 13th St., Suite 111  
Kansas City, MO 64106  
Toll-free: 866-971-8568

## 10) KANSAS CITY EAST/ TRANSITION VR

Joseph P. Teasdale State Office Building  
8800 E. 63rd St., Suite 260  
Raytown, MO 64133  
Toll-free: 866-831-1363

## 11) KANSAS CITY NORTH VR

8030 N. Oak Trafficway  
Kansas City, MO 64118  
Toll-free: 877-270-0198

## 12) KIRKSVILLE VR

1612 N. Osteopathy, Suite B  
Kirksville, MO 63501  
Toll-free: 877-222-8962

## 13) NEVADA VR

621 E. Highland Ave., Suite 2  
Nevada, MO 64772  
Toll-free: 800-598-3471

## 14) POPLAR BLUFF VR

1903 Northwood Drive, Suite 3  
Poplar Bluff, MO 63901  
Toll-free: 800-281-9894

## 15) ROLLA VR

1101A Kingshighway  
Rolla, MO 65401  
Toll-free: 800-890-2867

## 16) SEDALIA VR

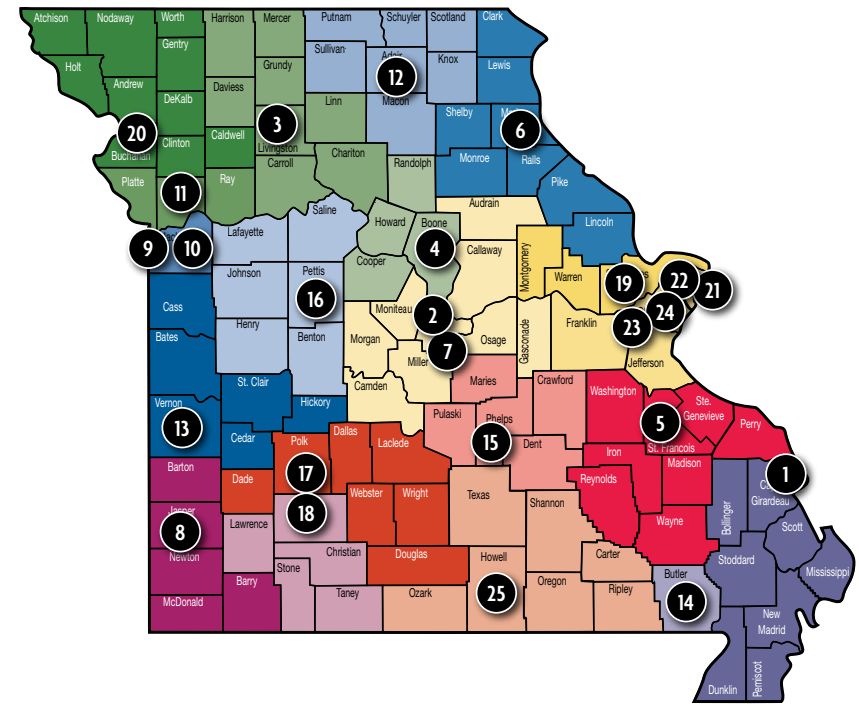
2115 W. Broadway Blvd.  
Sedalia, MO 65301  
Toll-free: 844-487-0495

## 17) SPRINGFIELD NORTH VR

613 E. Kearney St.  
Springfield, MO 65803  
Toll-free: 877-222-8965

## 18) SPRINGFIELD SOUTH VR

1735 W. Catalpa St., Suite C  
Springfield, MO 65807  
Toll-free: 877-222-8967



## 19) ST. CHARLES VR

3737 Harry S. Truman Blvd., Suite 400  
St. Charles, MO 63301  
Phone: 636-940-3300

## 20) ST. JOSEPH VR

State Office Building  
525 Jules St., Room 201  
St. Joseph, MO 64501  
Toll-free: 877-702-9876

## 21) ST. LOUIS DOWNTOWN VR

220 S. Jefferson Ave., Suite 110  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
Toll-free: 866-971-8569

## 22) ST. LOUIS NORTH VR

4040 Seven Hills Drive, Suite 257  
Florissant, MO 63033  
Phone: 314-475-7999

## 23) ST. LOUIS SOUTH VR

St. Louis South Service Center  
7545 S. Lindbergh Blvd., Suite 100  
St. Louis, MO 63125  
Toll-free: 877-222-8968

## 24) ST. LOUIS WEST/TRANSITION VR

9900 Page Ave., Suite 104  
St. Louis, MO 63132  
Phone: 314-587-4877

## 25) WEST PLAINS VR

3417 Division Drive, Suite 2  
West Plains, MO 65775  
Toll-free: 877-222-8959



Photo of the Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge in Cape Girardeau provided by **Wayne Clause**.



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*The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program receives 78.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal Fiscal Year 2021, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$64,569,784. The remaining 21.3 percent of the costs (\$17,475,685) was funded by state matching funds. The Supported Employment (SE) program receives 95 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal Fiscal Year 2021, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$270,888. The remaining 5 percent of the costs (\$14,257) was funded by state matching funds. The Independent Living (IL) program receives a portion of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For Federal Fiscal Year 2021, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$338,717 (90 percent). The remaining 10 percent (\$37,635) was funded by state matching funds. The IL program also received additional state funding for an overall total of \$5,153,103.*